

# Duxbury Clipper

SECTION  
**B**

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Section B

## A Journey Down Surplus Street: Part VI

### THE WADSWORTH CAPES

By DEBORA BABIN KATZ

Last week in this series we visited the Bartlett house, which was built by a hardworking shoemaker for his family. Now as we journey down Surplus Street, we arrive at three Capes skillfully constructed by the Wadsworth family. Here, we will explore the history behind the architectural style of the Cape Cod. Through deeds and town records, we will also uncover the story of Wait Wadsworth and his large family who called the road leading from the village to the meetinghouse their home. A pathway can be more than just a means of passage, it can be a place where roots are laid down and legacies are left to document days long since past.

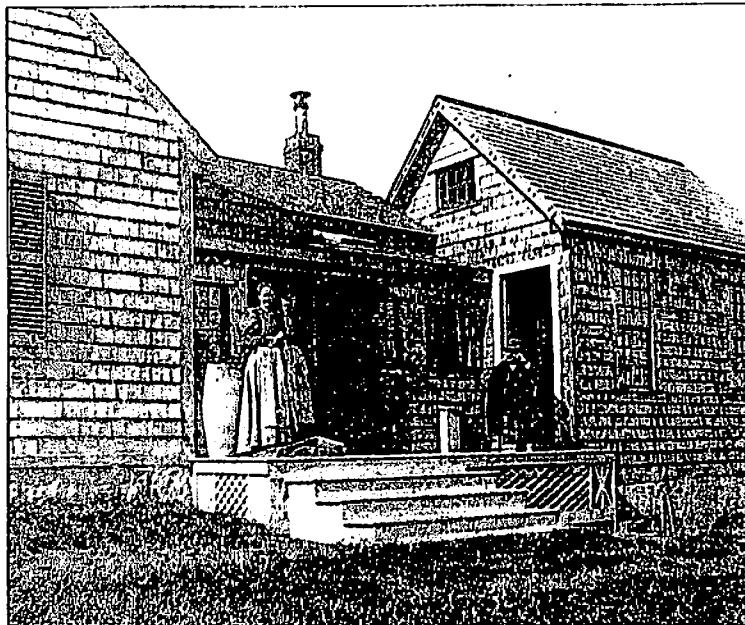
#### Matilda Wadsworth and Thomas Chandler House 104 Surplus Street

On May 10th 1806, Wait Wadsworth sold a parcel of his landholdings on Surplus Street to his daughter's husband, Thomas Chandler, for 50 dollars. Matilda, born in July of 1776, was Wait Wadsworth and Jerusha Bartlett Robinson's oldest daughter. She had married Thomas eight years earlier in 1798. Where the young couple lived before they built the Cape Cod near the Wadsworth family's homestead is unknown. Perhaps, they

stayed on with Wait and Priscilla Wadsworth since Thomas was away for long periods of time as a mariner.

Wait Wadsworth had originally purchased 2 1/2 acres in 1793 located across from 88 Surplus Street, and then in 1800 expanded his landholdings by purchasing 6 acres on the north side of Surplus Street from the estate of Ebenezer Delano. His dwelling no longer stands, but he most likely built a sturdy Cape Cod house where he raised ten children.

Jerusha and Wait's first child was Robert, who came



98 Surplus Street, c. 1900.  
Photo Courtesy of DR&HS

in 1774, and then Matilda, Silvia in 1781, Lucinda was born 1785, and Jerusha, named after her mother came in 1789. Three years later their son James was born. Sometime after 1797, when their youngest child Waity

was born, Jerusha died leaving Wait Wadsworth to raise his seven children.

Wait did not last long as a single parent, and married Priscilla Stetson Weston in January of 1799. She was a widow of John Weston who had been lost at sea. Priscilla and Wait continued to add to the already large Wadsworth family. They had Caroline, born in 1802, Lewis in 1804 and the youngest Wadsworth child, Jane was born in 1809.

Wait Wadsworth is described in deeds as a blacksmith. One researcher believes his blacksmith shop may have been moved up and across the street and is part of the house located at 88 Surplus Street, the home of Jeanne and John Clark.

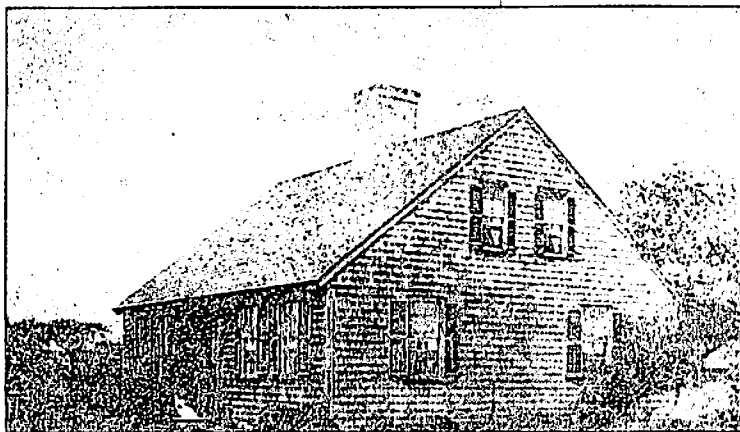
Wait Wadsworth was used to a large family. He had grown up with 13 siblings on his parent's homestead located on southeasterly slope of Captain's Hill. His father, Captain Wait Wadsworth, was

a Revolutionary hero who was first a lieutenant and then made captain in 1766. Abigail Bradford, Wait's mother, was the daughter of the Honorable Gamaliel Bradford.

Matilda and Thomas Chandler had already built their Cape Cod house on the lot her father sold to them in 1806. They had one daughter, also named Matilda. Thomas Chandler met his fate, however, in January of 1825 at the age of 55 years when he was lost at sea on a voyage to North Carolina. A gravestone placed at the Mayflower Cemetery in "his memory" can still be seen today.

In 1822, the Chandlers' daughter Matilda married James Peterson, the son of Joshua and Silva Soule Peterson. The couple lived in the Cape amongst the other Wadsworth family members on Surplus Street.

Tragically struck only two continued on page 10



104 Surplus Street, c. 1900, where Matilda Peterson once ran her shop.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DR&HS

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## A Journey Down Surplus Street

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and half years into their marriage when James died at the age of 33 years. Matilda was left to care for her infant son John James. She proved to be a strong woman as she faced even more misfortune when little John James died at the age of 18 months.

Mother and daughter would again be the only ones living in the house on Surplus Street until Matilda Wadsworth, daughter of Wait Wadsworth, died in 1832 at the age of 56 years. On her gravestone is the word relief of Thomas Chandler, which was an interchangeable word for widow.

With so much loss, it is surprising Matilda Wadsworth Peterson became a successful businesswoman, and all the more amazing for a female to be listed in the town census as a "trader" in the 1800s. An account of life in Duxbury in 1840 written by Pauline Winsor Wilkinson in 1921 describes Matilda Peterson and her business. "But for the little daintier laces or ribbons, when we were getting ready for the Thanksgiving ball... we walked across the pastures to Miss Matilda Peterson's. She had one front room in her house on Surplus Street, used as a shop, which was very quaint, but not more so than herself, a spinster tall and thin, with her reddish hair in puffs at the sides and a cap with ribbons perched on top of her head."

In 1884, Matilda Peterson died at the age of 84, leaving behind her ribbon business and her legacy as one of Duxbury's earliest female entrepreneurs.

**The Lucinda Wadsworth and Zenas Winsor House  
112 Surplus Street**  
The same year Matilda



98 Surplus Street has two back ellis and an open porch

PHOTO BY SALLY BARN

Wadsworth and her husband Thomas Chandler purchased their parcel of land from her father Wait Wadsworth; her younger sister Lucinda married Zenas Winsor, a mariner. It was the year 1806. Lucinda and Zenas had their first child, Deborah, two years later.

It is unknown where the couple resided during their first years of marriage. By 1811 they had two children, and most likely wanted a home of their own for their growing family. Just as Wait Wadsworth had sold a parcel of his land to his son-in-law Chandler, he now sold another parcel of his Surplus Street landholdings to Zenas for \$60 dollars. There is no mention of a dwelling in the conveyance of this land purchase. The couple most likely built their Cape Cod house with its large center chimney soon after the 1812 land purchase.

Once they were living in their new house, Lucinda gave birth to five more children, Lucinda born in 1813, Zenas Jr. in 1816, Jerusha R. in

1819, Helen C. in 1823, and Laurelia two years later.

Today, this Cape Cod con-

two windows located on either side of it. As with most Cape Cods, the large bricked central chimney dictates the location of all the rooms in the house, as well as, the placement and pitch of the front stairwell.

The floor plan of Lucinda and Zenas' house is typical of the Cape Cod style with two parlors on either side of the front entrance, a steep wrapping staircase just as you enter the front door, and a large keeping room in the rear.

The large central chimney was often found in the Cape Cod house, which included several fireplaces. Typically, there was a fireplace in the three rooms on the first level and one in the upstairs bedroom. They were often very shallow to provide the most effective means for heating

family gathered at the end of the day, the young children playing while the older children and adults did the chores...and the womenfolk gathered to piece their patchwork quilts," noted Doris Doane, author of *A Book of Cape Cod Houses*.

Today, the keeping room of Lucinda and Zenas' Cape Cod remains almost unchanged except for its use as a kitchen since a later addition provided a new kitchen to the rear of the original dwelling. (See photo) The current owners have restored and preserved all the woodwork. The beauty of the floors with 10 and 12-inch pine planks, wainscoting, and mantle provide a warm, cozy feeling, and one can easily image the Wadsworth-Winsor family gathered together, sharing the day's happenings and eating



The front parlor room of 112 Surplus Street was used only for formal occasions in the early 1800s.

PHOTO BY DEBORAH KATZ

tains most of its original details and layout. It is considered a full Cape since it has the center front door with

the rooms.

The front parlor was used only on special occasions such as weddings, and also for funerals. This space was typically more "finished" with intricate molding and a particular design in the mantelpiece over the fireplace. It was common practice to carve the mantle with a signature design, which might be repeated in other rooms and would set one builder apart from another. Today the parlor of 112 Surplus Street still shows the beauty and workmanship of its original builder. (See photo) The other room opposite the front parlor was often used as a downstairs bedroom, with its own fireplace to provide warmth during the cold winter months.

The keeping room was a large rectangular space with wide pine plank flooring containing a fireplace with a very large hearth for cooking. It was where most of the activities took place. "Here the

their meal before the warmth of this massive fireplace.

Another treasure found in the layout of this Cape is the fact the burning room still exists as it did when Lucinda delivered her babies here in the early 1800s. It has become rare to find this room, roughly a 7 by 10-foot space, still intact in Cape Cod houses as many homeowners during remodeling took down walls to create a large living space, or converted the room into a downstairs lavatory.

The burning room was always found adjacent to the keeping room, which provided both heat and a source of boiled water, "and a place where the infant could be close to its mother without being directly underfoot," said Doane. Today, Lucinda and Zenas Winsor's burning room is used for an office.

Zenas Winsor continued his career as a captain. During 1812 he was in charge of the Duxbury alarm-boat which was manned by six



Suzanne McMahon shows the keeping room's hearth at 112 Surplus Street.

PHOTO BY DEBORAH KATZ

## The Wadsworth Capes

from previous page

men and cruised the area between Plymouth beach and Saquish. "Instructions were given them to fire a gun on the approach of any of the enemy's barges, which was to be answered by the cannon at the batteries and along the shore, and a lighted tar-barrel at Captain's Hill," noted Justin Winsor.

Their children grew up among their Wadsworth cousins and many eventually married. There are no changes in title until 1847 when Zenas Winsor Jr. purchased the family homestead for \$500 from his father Captain Zenas Winsor. It appears Zenas Jr. did not purchase the house for his own use as a residence, as only Captain Zenas Winsor age 70 years and a sixty-year old woman named Priscilla Winsor were living in the Cape Cod on Surplus Street in 1855. Zenas Winsor Jr. appears to have also moved to Fairhaven, Massachusetts where he had one son, Zenas III.

Captain Zenas Winsor's wife, Lucinda Wadsworth passed away in January of 1855 at the age of 70 years old. It is unknown whether Priscilla was a second wife to Captain Zenas or some other relative. Later, she is the only resident of the house on Surplus Street, according to the

guardian for Zenas III by the probate court of New Bedford after the death of Zenas Jr. "of said Fairhaven." The property sold to Harrison Wadsworth for the handsome price of \$500, the highest bid. What relation Lucia Winsor was to Zenas, Jr. is still unclear; it may be she was a second wife to him and a stepmother to Zenas III.

Harrison Wadsworth was the son of Ahira Wadsworth who was a nephew of Wait Wadsworth. He purchased the Cape Cod house when he was twenty-four years old, and at the time must have been doing well since he could afford to spend \$500 to obtain the property during a time when the local economy was rather bleak.

Harrison remained at the property for the next 51 years, selling in 1917 to Archer Wadsworth, a painter by trade. "Archer used to mix his paints out in the back shed of the property," according to Bob McMahon, the current owner of the Cape Cod house.

It wasn't until 1940 when the property left the Wadsworth family. Their 128 years of ownership along with the fact only two subsequent owners have resided here explains why most of the full Cape has remained virtually untouched since the days of its original owners. As one walks along the wide pine

on the square lot, close to the old cart path that led to the shore. Another cart path along the west side of the lot existed and was part of the 1637 Duxborough Path.

Many of the early Cape Cod homes were built with their fronts facing south since the only means of heating the dwelling was from burning wood in the fireplaces. "The low winter sun added a warmth to the front rooms which were usually reserved for formal occasions...and for those who could not afford a clock, a secondary advantage was gained; when the sun shone directly in the front windows the family knew it was noontime," added Doane.

Perhaps James took advantage of the south side of the property and the higher elevation for warmth, or he simply wanted his Cape to be in line with his neighboring sisters' houses. He built a simple yet sturdy house. "The rafters are hand hewn beautifully and they are roughly 7 ft on center, with floor joists holding up the first floor that are in part mortised logs, partly hand hewn," noted Dorothy Wentworth.

James' floor plan is the typical full Cape Cod layout with "rooms anchored by a huge chimney." Like his sister Lucinda's house, there are three fireplaces on the first floor, and an old stairwell, which turns before reaching the second floor.

James had married Lydia Sylvester, daughter of John Sylvester, and the couple had no children at the time of the land purchase. Only two months after James' purchase of the property, he sold to Charles Sampson the lot and dwelling for the hefty price of \$750. James and Lydia moved to Plymouth where they raised four children.

The house remained in the Sampson family for the next 71 years. During their ownership an old building was moved on to the property for a summer kitchen, and later another one was added for a

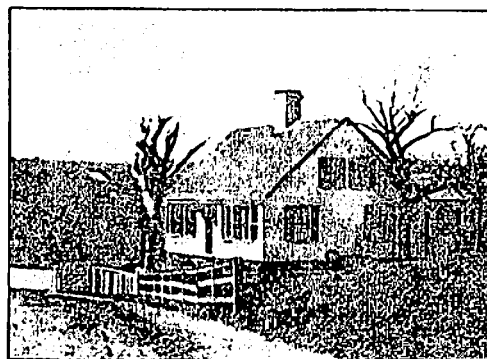
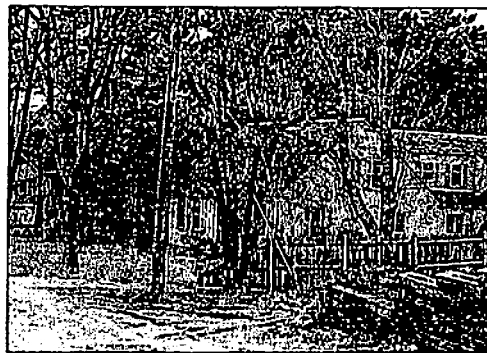


PHOTO COURTESY OF SUZANNE AND ROBERT McMAHON



Two views of 112 Surplus Street a century apart.

back shed. A lovely old photograph shows this side of house with the two ells and a large open porch. (See photo on page 8)

Charles Sampson appears to have run into some financial difficulties during his ownership of the house. In 1830, he sold the lot and dwelling house to Ichabod Sampson Jr. for \$357.50, obtaining a mortgage for the same amount "with lawful interest due in 3 years." Charles continued to live in the house.

Unfortunately, this mortgage did not appear to help Charles out of his financial difficulty because in 1836 a guardian, Ichabod Alden, was appointed by order of the Probate Court "to convey real estate of Charles Sampson to produce \$1,000 to pay his debt." Charles is described in the court document as a "spendthrift." Still Charles continued to reside in his Cape Cod house along Surplus Street.

In 1867, he sold the house

to his daughter-in-law, Tamar Sampson of East Abington, for \$500. She kept the house in the family, selling it to Thomas Sampson of Chelsea, who was the last Sampson to own the quaint Cape on the hill.

From 1892 to 1905 the house served as a summer residence. One owner, Charles Stetson was from New York who later sold the house to Harry Crocker of Brooklyn. This was a time in Duxbury known for its summer people. The train spurred the exodus from the city to the seashore. Many houses in town became summer residences. The town had entered a new phase of economic growth as businesses catered to the summer people; and inns and even resorts popped up throughout town. "Duxbury became such a way of life for these vacationers that it was advantageous for families either to purchase fine old sea captain's houses, when available, or to build their own summer houses," noted Margery MacMillan.

This Cape Cod house eventually converted back to its original use as a year-round residence. Its front parlors are still warmed by the winter sun shining through the old sturdy windows facing an ancient cart path now known as Surplus Street.

Next in this series, we will visit one of Duxbury's few remaining half houses and continue to explore the history behind the architecture of the Cape Cod style as we journey down one of Duxbury's oldest pathways.



Site of Wait Wadsworth's homestead c. 1900.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NADIA FOREST

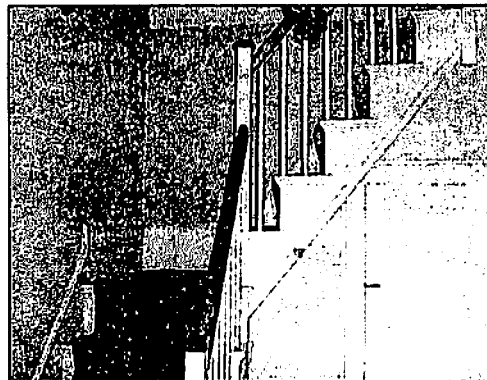
Census Report of 1865. It is possible that Zenas Jr. purchased the house in order to provide money to his father who may have been in financial need, and then continued to provide the house to his father and possibly a stepmother for the remainder of their lives.

Another mystery surrounds this Cape Cod house. In 1866, three years after the death of Captain Zenas Winsor, the house sold to a Harrison Wadsworth through an auction conducted by a guardian for Zenas III, the grandson of Winsor who was still a minor. A Lucia Winsor of Fairhaven was appointed

planks of this home, it is clear the owners recognized the treasures found within by leaving its original layout, posts, beams, floorboards, bricks, walls, stairwell, doors and windows unaltered as a testimony of Lucinda Wadsworth and her husband Zenas Winsor.

### James Wadsworth House 98 Surplus Street

In 1821 Wait Wadsworth sold a 150 foot square lot which was part of six acres he owned along Surplus Street to his son James for 36 dollars. James, who was twenty-nine years old at the time, had already built his Cape Cod house on a hill facing south



Front stairway of 112 Surplus Street

PHOTO BY DEBORAH KATZ